

VZCZCXYZ0026
OO RUEHWEB

DE RUEHGT #0772/01 1141712
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
O 241712Z APR 07
FM AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2486
INFO RUEHZA/WHA CENTRAL AMERICAN COLLECTIVE
RUEABND/DEA HQS WASHDC
RUEHME/AMEMBASSY MEXICO 4164
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 0828

UNCLAS GUATEMALA 000772

SIPDIS

SIPDIS
SENSITIVE

E.O. 12958:N/A

TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#) [KJUS](#) [EAID](#) [SNAR](#) [KCRM](#) [KDEM](#) [GT](#)

SUBJECT: INL DAS MCCAMPBELL MEETS WITH HUMAN RIGHTS LEADERS DURING
GUATEMALA VISIT

REF: A. GUATEMALA 0612

[1](#)B. GUATEMALA 0494

[1](#)C. GUATEMALA 0403

[1](#)D. GUATEMALA 0375

[1](#)E. GUATEMALA 0348

Sensitive but unclassified. Protect accordingly.

[1](#)1. (SBU) Summary: INL Deputy Assistant Secretary Christy McCampbell met April 18 with UNHCHR, the Myrna Mack Foundation, and the Human Rights Ombudsman's Office during a four-day visit to Guatemala that also included meetings with the National Civilian Police and the new Minister of Government (septel). UNHCHR criticized the Guatemalan government for having ignored the critical issue of public insecurity and for failing to develop the civilian police. The Myrna Mack Foundation and the Human Rights Ombudsman's Office noted that although the murder rate has increased there has been no evidence that women have been targeted on the basis of their gender.
End summary.

[1](#)2. (SBU) During an April 18 meeting with INL Deputy Assistant Secretary Christy McCampbell, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights

SIPDIS

(UNHCHR) Anders Kompass observed that public security has not improved. He commented that, while the elite enjoy the luxury of private security guards, the common people continue to live in a constant state of insecurity. The government has done very little to address the problem, and would have continued doing little had it not been for the high-profile, highly publicized murders of the Salvadoran parliamentarians in February (reftels).

[1](#)3. (SBU) Kompass described the current Administration as "lame duck" with "almost zero" credibility, and the appointment of the new Minister of Government as too late, with elections only a few months away, to bring about any significant change. He stressed that change requires political will, democratic commitment, and resources, which the Administration lacks. While UNHCR and the international community can provide technical support to strengthen institutional capacity, the Guatemalans themselves ultimately have to take responsibility.

[1](#)4. (SBU) Kompass cited the government's failure to invest in and support a professional civilian police force as "one of the worst failures since the signing of the Peace Accords." He claimed that even prior to the Salvadoran murders it was widely rumored that the National Civilian Police (PNC) was more or less running a death squad with the knowledge of the former Minister of Government and the former head of police. He pointed out that this extrajudicial police activity, despite some popular support, has led to widespread negative public perception and lack of public confidence in the police. INL DAS McCampbell urged a more stringent system for recruiting, evaluating, and retaining police. Kompass agreed that

police reform is a necessity, but said the reality is that there is no one in the National Civilian Police with 20 years of experience who is clean and could assume a leadership role.

15. (SBU) Kompas noted that while the military is better organized and more disciplined than the police, it still suffers from a lingering negative public image stemming from its role during the violent internal conflict and the lack of accountability for the abuses it committed during that period. He warned that as long as the military establishment refuses to accept responsibility for its actions it "sends the wrong message."

16. (SBU) In a separate meeting at the Human Rights Ombudsman's Office (PDH), Deputy Ombudsman Dunia de Leal described the PDH mission of defending and promoting human rights as critical because many Guatemalans do not know the extent of their rights or how to file a formal complaint. She commented that during the internal conflict, the most common complaints were against the military, while now the most common complaints are against the police for abuse of authority or violations of the law.

17. (SBU) De Leal noted that PDH recently presented a proposal to President Berger and Vice President Stein to purge and reform the police. DAS McCampbell stressed that the USG is very supportive of the GOG initiative to vet all police officers, but noted the challenge of purging several thousand police officers, especially in a country with an already insufficient number of police officers to provide security.

18. (SBU) Marco Ramirez, PDH Special Investigations consultant, cited impunity as the biggest problem in Guatemala. He described a vicious cycle of ineffective investigations, resulting in few convictions, leading to the commission of more crimes, which in turn lead to loss of credibility and public confidence in government institutions, leading to weaker institutions, resulting in ineffective investigations. He stressed that correct application of the law is fundamental to the rule of law and that PDH is working

with churches and civil society to improve respect for the rule of law.

19. (SBU) On the question of "femicide," De Leal pointed out that Guatemala has high numbers of female victims as in other Latin American countries, but she did not suggest that those murders were gender-motivated. Carmen Aida Ibarra, Myrna Mack Foundation political coordinator, said that female murder victims, which totaled approximately 600 out of 6,000 murders in 2006, or ten percent, reflect just a portion of the many murders committed last year. She noted that while there are many hypotheses regarding killings of women, there is no conclusive evidence to suggest that women are targeted. Most are victims of common crime, which include crimes of passion and domestic violence, and of a pervasive culture of impunity that threatens every sector of society.

110. (SBU) With regard to police abuses, Ibarra said the Foundation, as well as the UN Rapporteur, publicized the criminal behavior of police long before the Salvadoran murders. She identified three categories of criminal police behavior: ordinary crime, e.g., stopping a car and demanding a bribe; involvement in narcotrafficking and organized crime and use of the police structure to provide services; and "social cleansing," a non-institutional activity but tolerated or ignored by police leadership.

111. (SBU) According to Ibarra, electoral violence and penetration by narcotrafficking and organized crime of political parties and campaigns are not new, but are again prominent topics because this year is an election year. The problem, intensifying with each new election, is affecting the functioning of political parties and discouraging potential candidates from running or volunteering for campaigns, yet no one is addressing the problem, widely regarded as a problem for the State to address.

112. (SBU) Ibarra has observed improvements since the signing of the Peace Accords despite the emergence of narcotrafficking and organized crime influences during the post-conflict period. She pointed out that during the conflict the military regime controlled the country; now, Guatemala has a new Constitution, a new prison system, a new Constitutional Court, and reformed judicial

institutions. She said, however, that Guatemala must also change the political culture.

¶13. (SBU) In describing its successes, Ibarra said the Foundation has worked with the Administration to strengthen the Supreme Court and the Attorney General's Office and to promote the International Commission Against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG), among other activities. In 2006, the Foundation lobbied for passage of a law against organized crime, a law on private security services, and a law on the penitentiary system.

DERHAM